

Boelhouwe House  
300 North Alamo  
San Antonio, Bexar County  
Texas

HABS No. TEX-3153

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Western Office, Division of Design and Construction  
1000 Geary Street  
San Francisco, California

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PHOTOGRAPH-DATA BOOK REPORT  
HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

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BOELHAUWE HOUSE

San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

ADDRESS: 321 North Alamo, San Antonio, Texas

OWNER: Miss Clara Boelhauwe and  
Mrs. Ida Grossenbacher Hofheinz

OCCUPANT: Service Finance Corporation

USE: Business Establishment

ARCHITECT &  
BUILDER: Apparently, there was no architect as such, but  
Benjamin Grossenbacher and Joseph Boelhauwe were  
competent builders, and it can be assumed that  
they made what plans or drawings were considered  
necessary.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The house is significant historically because it is located on the outskirts of the old "Irish Flats", although built by a German; and because it is a surviving creation of cabinet makers and wood workers of considerable skill. It is significant architecturally because it is an outstanding example of "jig-saw" ornamentation of the Victorian era in this region.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The first owner of the property was Benjamin Grossenbacher, who built the original three-room and porch unit of the house in 1876-77. Upon his death, the house and property came into the possession of his widow, Mary Riff Boelhauwe, and, when she married Joseph Boelhauwe in 1886, the house was enlarged by him to substantially its present dimensions.

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Mr. Grossenbacher was a native of Germany; and, evidently, a cabinet maker and woodworker of considerable skill. The Boelhauwes, also, were builders, and one of their descendants has been a prominent San Antonio architect for many years. Joseph Boelhauwe was a German emigrant of Dutch abstraction, and his wife, who came from adjoining Medina County, was of French and German parentage.

The house is now owned by the two surviving daughters of Mary Riff Boelhauwe by inheritance.

#### Alterations and Additions:

Numerous later remodelings by the Boelhauwes were minor in character and, generally, consisted of interior changes. The renovation for business required by the present occupants, which occurred in 1927, consisted of the elimination of many of the original partitions.

#### REFERENCES

Alluring San Antonio, by Lillie Mae Hagner, pp. 65-66, published by the Naylor Press in 1940.

A Hundred Years in San Antonio, by the Pioneer Flour Mills, Ernest Schuchard, Compiler, p. 34, published by the Naylor Press in 1951.

Miss Clara Boelhauwe, 315 North Alamo, or the Menger Hotel, San Antonio, Texas, was interviewed personally.

#### ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Architectural Character: Victorian "Jig-Saw"

Condition of Fabric: The house is in relatively good condition.

#### EXTERIOR

Overall Dimensions: 40' wide by 50' deep.

Foundation: Natural limestone laid in lime mortar

Wall Construction: 12" to 13" thick natural limestone and stuccoed common brick.

Porch: Front porch, 8'-0" deep, with wood ceiling, floor, columns, entablature, baluster railing, all intricately ornamented. Cornice supported by decorative wood brackets.

Chimneys and Fireplaces: Fireplaces with cast iron mantels back-to-back in dining room and one bed room (one mantel remains). Chimneys with flue openings to all rooms.

Doorways and Doors: Four panel with vertical center rail; front door flanked by glass sidelights.

Windows: 4/4 double hung; most of them had segmental arched heads. All windows were provided with movable louver shutters.

Roof: Tin, standing seam; double gables running east and west, concealed on front elevation by wood parapet.

Cornice: Roof overhang, about 1'-0" with ornamental rafter ends; false parapet on front, replete with ornamental brackets.

## INTERIOR

Floor Plan: A central hall and a central dining room were flanked by a parlor and three bedrooms on the south, and three bedrooms and a kitchen on the north. A stairway off the dining room led to a cellar under the adjoining north bed room. A service porch recessed between the kitchen and the southwest bed room was built over a well, which was provided with a hand pump.

Flooring: Wood, 1x5 T&G, (now covered with asphalt tile).

Wall and Ceiling Finish: Wall finish was plaster on wood lath; ceiling finish was plaster on wood lath. Ceilings are about 12' high.

Doors: 4-Panel with vertical center rail.

Trim: Classic backband (partially replaced by Victorian trim with corner blocks); a decorative picture mould; 1"x5" single beaded wood base, (replaced by Victorian base in areas where trim was replaced).

Partitions: 5" finish thickness wood stud partitions.

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Hardware: Rim locks with brass knobs.

Lighting: Originally, gas; wired for electricity now.

Heating: Fireplaces and wood stoves, originally.

#### OUT BUILDINGS

There were many outhouses at one time, including a 7-room brick rent house built by Mr. Grossenbacher; a 15' by 25' remnant of this building with cellar remains. The original wash house, toilet, carriage house, feed house, and barn have disappeared.

#### SITE

Setting - The house faces approximately east, and is located on the southwest corner of North Alamo and Fourth Streets, just a few blocks from the present day business district. The set-back from adjoining streets is normal.

Fence - The six foot high round-picket fence, front yard flower garden and graveled walks bordered with brick, have disappeared, as well as the cistern in the rear yard, which used to catch rain water from the roofs.

Landscaping - The yard is now covered with St. Augustine carpet grass.

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